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A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

OF THE

SONS of the CLERGY,

IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH of St. PAUL,

On THURSDAY, May 15, 1777.

By the Honourable and Reverend
JAMES CORNWALLIS,
Dean of Canterbury.

To which is added

A List of the ſeveral Amounts, ariſing from the Collections made at the Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy ſince the Year 1721.

CANTERBURY:
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TO

The Moſt Honourable the MARQUIS of GRANBY,
The Right Honourable the EARL of RADNOR,
The Right Reverend the LORD BISHOP of CHESTER,
Sir JAMES EYRE, Knight,
FREDERICK BULL, Eſq; and Alderman,
Reverend RICHARD KAYE, L. L. D.
Reverend JAMES WALLER, D. D.
Reverend HERBERT MAYO, D. D.
Reverend RICHARD RYCROFT, D. D.
Reverend JOHN JAMES MAJENDIE, D. D.
WILLIAM RIX, Eſq;
MATTHEW BLOXAM, Eſq;

STEWARDS

For the LATE FEAST of the SONS of the CLERGY,

THIS

SERMON,

Preached and Publiſhed at their Requeſt,

IS INSCRIBED

by their moſt faithful,

and obedient Servant,

JAMES CORNWALLIS.

1 TIM. vi. 18.

THAT THEY DO GOOD, THAT THEY BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, READY TO DISTRIBUTE, WILLING TO COMMUNICATE.

TIMOTHY, who was commanded to deliver this injunction, reſided at Epheſus; where that diſſoluteneſs and effeminacy of manners prevailed, which are uſually to be found with a deſtructive train of attendants, pride, an inſolent contempt for inferiors, and an inſenſibility to their ſufferings. It was therefore greatly the province of an exemplary biſhop, to endeavour to avert conſequences ſo inconſiſtent with the ſincere profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ſo oppoſite to every labour of love.

THERE

THERE is, indeed, among us too much reaſon to lament a ſimilarity of cauſes; but we have the happineſs to know, that the prevalence of their effects may be checked. A want of compaſſion to our fellow creatures can not, with truth or juſtice, be held out, as the character of our age or nation: and we ſhall not, I hope, be thought to arrogate too much, if we aſſume ſome degree of merit, upon this account, to our order, and the influence of this annual ſolemnity. May we not boaſt, that a ſtream of beneficence, iſſuing from this ſource, hath extended its courſe, watered the neighbouring plains, and gladdened the whole face of the country?

THIS inſtitution was one of the firſt of the kind. Miniſters in ſucceſſion have "brought forth their ſtrong reaſons" in ſupport of it. And in order that no honourable means might be omitted to animate the feeling heart in a good cauſe; to the claims of the orphan ſtate, to the repreſentations of diſtreſs, have been added the powers of ſympathetic harmony.

IT muſt have had, then, a great ſhare in diffuſing that benevolent ſpirit, which breathes through the precepts

cepts of our moſt holy religion, "the end of whoſe commandments is charity": and the ſeed hath brought forth its increaſe. But notwithſtanding this ſucceſs, can we be without our apprehenſions? The ſeductions of luxury and diſſipation are not leſs dangerous to the duration of this virtue, than pride and ſelf-importance were to her riſe and progreſs. She, with all her modeſt, humble, unaſſuming train, muſt neceſſarily be the firſt victim. Indeed, the very exiſtence of theſe vices proves, that our compaſſionate feelings are far ſhort of that degree of perfection, which a God of mercy expects, and his revelation inculcates.

THE neceſſitous have, at leaſt, an imperfect right to all ſuch ſuperfluities, as, when retained, would be injurious to us; and charity only deſires, that this part may be employed in acts of benevolence. Opulence is not beſtowed upon us, in order to feed our vanity, and indulge our caprice: ſuch a perverſion of it has a natural tendency to corrupt the heart; a proper application will purify and refine it, by gratifying its nobleſt propenſities. And yet, there is ſcarcely any vice, however pernicious, as was obſerved of any ſyſtem of philoſophy, however abſurd, but what has found its advocates.

vocates. Even diſſipation hath been thought by ſome to be of advantage to poverty: but, it is to be feared, ſhe ſtarves as many as ſhe feeds. Her dependents are often involved in ruin, who might have lived happily. Thoſe, whom ſhe nouriſhes at one time, ſhe deſerts at another; when they can no longer miniſter to thoſe wants, which fluctuate with the faſhion, or originate from an ambition to preſide over it. The providence of God, which educes good out of evil, makes the vices or follies of the rich a partial benefit to the poor: but what is thus conveyed, is too variable for a permanent ſupply, too limited for general diſtreſs. If we would really "do good," benevolence alone muſt dictate: if we would "be rich in good works," we muſt love as brethren," and, in virtue of that relation, be "ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate."

THE ſtrict neceſſity, then, of charitable contribution, and that too from charitable motives only, hath been ſuggeſted, and is expreſsly inſiſted on by the apoſtle. We are now naturally led to conſider the objects of it.

"As we have opportunity, we are to do good unto all men:" but we may ſurely, without any want of modeſty,

modeſty, challenge a particular regard to the offspring of thoſe, who have miniſtered to the ſpiritual wants of their fellow-creatures. The cauſe of religion ſeems to be greatly connected with their welfare; that cauſe, which every man, who reflects without prejudice, muſt think entitled to his firſt and chief ſupport. We are confirmed too in this ſentiment by examining the conduct of our bleſſed Saviour. In his progreſs through Judea, when he fed the hungry, and cured diſeaſes, the ultimate aim of this charity of God to man was to propagate the faith, and inculcate his doctrines. Whatever tends then to the promotion of religion and virtue, muſt have a precedence among our good works: and it is, in every reſpect, upon this conſideration, that I propoſe the preſent charity to your protection: a charity, which hath the ſtrongeſt claims in its favour, is free from the objections made to others, and hath the purity of moral conduct for its great object.

With reſpect to claims,* whether from public ſervices, integrity of character, or diſintereſtedneſs of

* Whoever has read the admirable diſcourſe, publiſhed laſt year upon this occaſion, muſt have beheld the conduct of the Engliſh clergy, even in very remote times, with pleaſure and ſatisfaction.

conduct, the clergy of the church of England have never, perhaps, exhibited ſtronger than at this time.

And, certainly, if the characters of the early teachers of Chriſtianity in this country were to be more particularly inquired into, and impartially examined; they would be found to merit, on many accounts, a much more favourable deſcription, than that, which we have, for the moſt part, received of them. Dr. Campbell, indeed, (*Polit. Surv. Vol. II. Note in page* 328, *and Vol. II. page* 333) relates the great advantages, political as well as moral, which were derived from their influence and example: but he thinks it neceſſary to apologize in ſome meaſure for bearing this teſtimony. And many, perhaps, who have made deep reſearches into the annals of thoſe times, have not ventured to reveal the truths, which they diſcovered, with regard to this ſubject; leſt they ſhould appear to countenance the ſuperſtition, in which the profeſſors of our religion were then involved. But, ſurely, no harm can now ariſe, and much good may ſpring, from exhibiting the beneficial effects, which the goſpel has been able to produce upon minds, thus clouded by prejudice. What friend is there to that goſpel of peace, but muſt rejoice at the information, which he has lately received, reſpecting the humane exertions of the Spaniſh Miſſionaries in favour of the enſlaved Indians; or, that can heſitate to pronounce from it, that Chriſtianity gives birth to true ſentiments of freedom? The excellent and impartial hiſtorian tells us; "They were miniſters of peace, who endeavoured to wreſt the rod from the hands of oppreſſors. To their powerful interpoſition the Americans were indebted for every regulation tending to mitigate the rigour of their fate. The clergy in the Spaniſh ſettlements, regular as well as ſecular, are ſtill conſidered by the Indians as their natural guardians; to whom they have recourſe

under

THE decency, moderation, and firmneſs of our brethren in America, in the moſt trying and critical ſituation, can not have eſcaped your notice. The moſt ſevere ſufferings did not deter them from the work of the miniſtry; or ſilence thoſe pious inſtructions, which they thought themſelves bound to inculcate,* as long as they were allowed to inculcate them, conſiſtently with the dictates of honour and conſcience. They have kept no intereſted point in view. They have been immoveably firm to their duty; when they could, for the moſt part, have no proſpect of temporal reward; when they could have no expectations of obtaining an adequate compenſation for their loſſes.

THESE conſiderations then, I conceive, at the ſame time that they reflect no ſmall luſtre upon the character of our brethren, who have been thus tried, will greatly tend to the credit and advantage of the whole order; and

under the hardſhips and exactions, to which they are too often expoſed." *Robertſon's Hiſtory of America, Vol. II. p.* 351.

* See the abſtracts of the proceedings of the Society for the Propagation of the Goſpel in Foreign Parts, printed in 1776 and 1777.

conciliate

conciliate to it the eſteem and affection of all mankind. Every obſerver, whatever his political, whatever his religious tenets may be, will admire a conduct, evidently the reſult of honeſt principles and conſcientious motives. And we may, at leaſt, promiſe to ourſelves one deſirable event from a moſt gloomy and diſmal ſcene. Unmerited calumnies muſt ſubſide. Imputations of a temporizing diſpoſition, and a want of ſincerity, ſo difficult to be diſproved in quiet times, muſt ſurely give way to a more friendly opinion of the clergy, now founded upon experience. What happy effects may they not foreſee from ſuch cauſes to the ſervice of religion, as well as their own proſperity and happineſs? May they not reaſonably hope, that the laity will engage warmly in promoting their general welfare; will conſider them as the true ſervants of Chriſt for their ſakes; and readily aſſiſt in every undertaking for their comfort and ſupport? And during the prevalence of ſuch ſentiments, to what more proper or uſeful plan can they direct their attention, than the excellent inſtitution of this day?

THE deplorable ſituation, to which the neceſſitous children of too many clergymen are reduced, is a melancholy proof, that our collections upon this occaſion have

have not been equal to the completion of our wiſhes. We have not experienced thoſe beneficial effects, which might have been expected from the great influx of national wealth. Yet this inſtitution remains unimpeached, free from every objection, which popular prejudice has raiſed againſt others.

CHARITY, becauſe it is ſometimes neceſſarily indiſcriminate, and relieves the vicious, is ſaid to countenance vice, as well as virtue; and therefore to be dangerous, or uſeleſs to ſociety. But this objection loſes all its force in the preſent caſe, when our profeſſed intention is only to reward virtuous labours, and to promote induſtrious piety.

CHARITY is charged alſo with furniſhing ability to vice; and to ſupport this aſſertion, its enemies have not ſpared the inſtruction of children. It has been ſaid, that many, who have received a pious education, and behaved ſuitably under the eye of a parent, or revered inſtructor, have, when releaſed from theſe reſtraints, been ſeduced into the moſt dangerous exceſſes: that their inclination to evil has not been extinguiſhed by the care beſtowed upon them; whilſt their ability to

do

do it has been increaſed. But can we reap, where we have not ſown? Teaching is neceſſary in order to practice, although practice be not a neceſſary conſequence of knowledge. Nor can we juſtify ourſelves in withholding from any of our fellow-creatures the poſſibility of being uſeful. Be this plea, however, falſe or true, we derive from it an inference favourable to our preſent deſigns. If it be falſe, and the communication of knowledge allowed to be our duty; it is our duty alſo to render it as complete and perfect as poſſible: if true, and it be convicted of furniſhing ability to vice; we procure from it equal attention to this undertaking. We are not now applying for a communication of the firſt rudiments: we propoſe only to give thoſe abilities, which are already poſſeſſed, a proper direction.

And if early attainments in literature, where there are no certain means of rendering them uſeful to ſociety, be ſometimes deemed a ſubject for cenſure; can they be ſo in this inſtance? The pious parent can hardly be blamed for having endeavoured to make his children a comfort and amuſement to himſelf; for having provided rational companions againſt his more advanced

vanced years; or for having enabled them to attain ſome degree of eminence in life. Even a moderate wiſh of this kind can not, ſurely, be condemned in the clergy, when it is ſo univerſally prevalent, and in ſo much a greater degree, among other orders of men. His hopes too, perhaps, could not have been fruſtrated but by his death, or by the not attaining of thoſe emoluments, which were ſtrictly due to the integrity of his character, the purity of his morals, and the fervency of his zeal. He had poſſibly been himſelf intruſted with the education of others, and had ſeen in them the advantages of it. Shall we condemn a laudable ambition? an ambition, which could only have been defeated by an untimely death, or a cruel, unmerited diſappointment?

Or, if his inability to complete the education of his children had been foreſeen by him; may we not reaſonably ſuppoſe, that the advocate for beneficence, he, who had ſo often expatiated on the duty of charity, and added his example, might hope for ſome aſſiſtance, ſhould adverſity be his lot, and ſhould it prove his misfortune to leave his wife a widow, and his children fatherleſs? He might reflect too, how ſtrong, how

how irreſiſtible the claim would be: that his conſcience bore him witneſs, he had endeavoured to make the beſt uſe of the few talents committed to his charge: "but what were they among ſo many?" He had not diſſipated them in unprofitable, much leſs, vicious purſuits; but had ever attempted to ſatisfy the various demands of his ſtation in life, and of his family: and might he not be naturally led to hope, that what had been equally the objects of his anxious concern, might equally experience future ſupport; the former, from the piety and benevolence of his ſucceſſor; the latter, from the compaſſionate feelings of the human heart?

It could not but occur likewiſe, that the nature and tendency of their application to the public would add no ſmall degree of weight to it. They would not ſolicit a relief from that miſery, in which a guilty conduct had overwhelmed them: they would only deſire to be preſerved from preſent guilt, as the moſt effectual ſecurity againſt future want. They would only petition to become uſeful members of the community.

Complete then, what has been thus fondly anticipated. Permit them, it is all we aſk, to be induſtrious,

trious, to be virtuous, to be pious. And, we apprehend, they can already exhibit to this end more than common qualifications. Their minds have been tinctured, by a parent's care, with a diſtinguiſhing ſenſe of good and evil. They have been made acquainted with the doctrines of their faith at the earlieſt period; and *inherit* no prejudices againſt religion. Their fathers neither lived, nor died, "without hope, and without God in the world." They knew how vain and inſufficient the ſupport of virtue muſt be without the foundation of faith: they knew that virtue muſt be added to faith; and that it would *then* produce that degree of perfection, which not only "*the nature of human frailty will permit*,"* but the Creator of the human race

* See Dr. Adam Smith's letter to Mr. Strahan, publiſhed a few weeks before this ſermon was preached, with Mr. Hume's life, written by himſelf.

Theſe pieces ſeem to have been given to the public, merely to ſhew to what purity and perfection in morality we may attain, without the aſſiſtance of revelation, without future hopes and fears. But Mr. Soame Jenyns, ſays: "Mankind have undoubtedly at various times received ſo much knowledge by divine communications, and have ever been ſo much inclined to impute it all to their own ſufficiency, that it is now difficult to determine, what human reaſon unaſſiſted *can* effect." *View of Internal Evidence, page* 115. Mr.

 Locke

hath required. Upon ſuch advantageous impreſſions good habits may eaſily be formed; though not, perhaps, without the benefit of farther example, and the reſtraint of well-directed authority. But thus prepared, they will " be obedient to their maſters, not with eye-ſervice, as men-pleaſers, but in ſingleneſs of heart," fearing God; " knowing that whatſoever good thing any man doth, the ſame ſhall he receive, whether bond or free."

Locke plainly tells us, what it *can not* effect: " It is too hard a taſk for unaſſiſted reaſon to eſtabliſh morality in all its parts upon its true foundations, with a clear and convincing light." *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity, page* 532. And Biſhop Sherlock, attributing our boaſted progreſs in moral attainments to the true cauſe, expreſſes himſelf with great energy, as well as beauty: " What elſe can it be aſcribed to, but the power of the goſpel, that in every nation, that names the name of Chriſt, even reaſon and nature condemn the follies, which others, for the want of the ſame help, are held in ſubjection to?--- And how deſpitefully do we treat the goſpel of Chriſt, to which we owe that clear light of reaſon and nature, which we now enjoy, when we endeavour to ſet up reaſon and nature in oppoſition to it! Ought the withered hand, which Chriſt has reſtored, and made whole, to be lifted up againſt him? Or ſhould the dumb man's tongue, juſt looſened from the bonds of ſilence, blaſpheme the power that ſet it free? Yet thus *fooliſhly do we ſin*, when we make natural religion the engine to batter down the goſpel." *Diſcourſes, Vol. I. page* 14, 15.

OR,

OR, ſhould they fall away from their ſtedfaſtneſs: ſhould their improvements not be anſwerable to your wiſhes: ſuggeſtions will occur of the moſt ſalutary nature, and at the ſame time peculiar to their ſituation. Such, as tend to excite a ſenſe of ſhame, are ſometimes more prevalent, than what are dictated by the general precepts of morality, and religion. They may be put in mind, then, not to deſpiſe thoſe duties, which it was the higheſt ambition of the father to teach: not to reject the cauſe of religion and virtue, which, as it is theirs by deſcent, and their only inheritance too, they are called upon by every conſideration to maintain.

NOR are our hopes founded upon vain and deluſive premiſes: we do not hold out to you merely a ſpeculative notion. It has been reduced to practice, and with ſucceſs. There are many, I am confident, preſent,*

* Many perſons, who have been formerly apprenticed out by this charity, and are now in reſpectable ſtations of life, conſtantly attend this anniverſary meeting. Several of them have been ſtewards for the FEAST of the SONS of the CLERGY, by whom the expences of every kind, attending the collection, are defrayed. The money collected is entirely applied to the purpoſes of the charity.

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who bear teſtimony, that your expectations on former occaſions were not groundleſs: who exhibit the faireſt repreſentations of our deſign: who owe to the liberality of this day, eaſe, comfort, ſatisfaction, even affluence, and, with it, the ability to aſſiſt others; but, above all, moral and religious freedom. Should not this pleaſing reflection encourage us to continue our protection to this charity? Shall we be weary of well-doing, when we have ſo much reaſon to be ſatisfied with former attempts; and deprive ſucceeding generations of thoſe advantages, which we have received? No ſmall ſtreſs is laid upon conveying down civil privileges unimpaired to our lateſt poſterity. This argument hath properly never been omitted in our exertions for civil liberty: why then ſhould it be forgotten in the conteſt for moral and religious attainments? Shall we overlook ſuch ſtriking intereſts of ſociety? regard the ſuperſtructure, and neglect the foundation? The youth of the preſent age are the depoſitaries, in which are placed all our hopes, as far as man is concerned, of purity of faith, as well as of political freedom in the next generation. Their principles will be thoſe of the times, which ſucceed ours; and will

mark

mark them with atheiſm, ſuperſtition, or devotion; with ſlavery, licentiouſneſs, or liberty. Many there are, in this * and other great commercial cities, who, from a ſituation as helpleſs as that of your preſent petitioners, have arrived at a ſhare of public confidence; have been intruſted with the adminiſtration of juſtice, the puniſhment of moral and civil offenders. On theſe our pious endeavours then depend, in ſome meaſure, the future honour of God; the power, ſtability, and happineſs of the community; its ſpiritual, as well as temporal glory. This remark, indeed, may be applied to all undertakings of a ſimilar tendency. The providing proper maſters for neceſſitous children is an object of charity always of public utility, and liable to no objections. But when you conſider the birth and qualifications of thoſe, for whom we now interceed; we conceive, you will find much additional weight thrown into a ſcale, which before prepon-

* This Sermon was preached at St. Paul's church, in the preſence of the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen, &c. of the city of London.

derated,

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derated, and a plan, at all times excellent, rendered perfect.

WHAT remains then, but to exhort you not to defeat theſe important views. Conſult your own feelings. Are you anxious for the ſpiritual good of your own offspring? and do you believe, that application to buſineſs, and a habit of induſtry, are the ſtrongeſt antidotes againſt the contagion of the world? Withhold it not from thoſe, whoſe parents were, perhaps, your equals in every valuable endowment: that they were not ſo in worldly poſſeſſions, might be their praiſe. It might be owing to a ſtrict attention to the important calls of their profeſſion, and a conſcientious regard to the duties of the goſpel: to that humility, which "thinketh not more highly than it ought to think, but thinketh ſoberly:" to that charity, which "envieth not, ſeeketh not her own." Enable their children therefore to withſtand the temptations, which are ready to ſeduce them, as they enter into public life, out of the aſylum of truth and innocence, in which they have hitherto been protected. And may you be the happy inſtruments of turning many

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to righteouſneſs! May it be by your bounty, that thoſe, who have already " been humbled under the mighty hand of God," may feel the exalting power of that Providence, " which careth for them."

F I N I S.

A Liſt of the annual Amount of the *Contributions* to this Charity is ſubjoined from the Year 1721, to the Year 1777 incluſive. And it is hoped, that the benevolent Intention of ſo good an Inſtitution, by which ſo many valuable Members to Society have been raiſed, will never be ſuffered to languiſh, but on the contrary go Hand in Hand with the Liberality of the Times.

	l.	s.	d.
1721	330	16	0
1722	328	16	0
1723	382	6	0
1724	566	10	0
1725	630	5	0
1726	575	4	0
1727	655	0	0
1728	579	17	9
1729	523	6	11
1730	722	6	4
1731	840	1	0
1732	951	1	3
1733	909	6	0
1734	1000	3	0
1735	850	5	3
1736	837	7	0
1737	856	9	7
1738	935	2	7
1739	912	11	3
1740	784	1	6
1741	834	2	0
1742	866	6	2
1743	819	0	0
1744	848	16	9
1745	1044	0	0
1746	922	10	0
1747	1062	2	0
1748	916	6	6
1749	985	12	6
1750	1134	14	0
1751	1167	19	0
1752	1101	18	6
1753	1063	2	6
1754	976	8	2
1755	1096	3	6
1756	973	18	3
1757	912	7	6
1758	1081	18	7
1759	1163	9	9
1760	1122	8	9
1761	1096	15	0
1762	836	13	9
1763	1224	14	0
1764	1009	2	9
1765	1207	11	10
1766	1149	6	5
1767	902	19	5
1768	935	6	11
1769	803	1	6
1770	786	16	6
1771	956	8	0
1772	900	5	6
1773	976	9	3
1774	942	17	6
1775	866	13	3
1776	880	7	6
1777	1000	0	0

Benefactions to this Charity will be thankfully received by Mr. *John Bacon*, at the Firſt-Fruits Office, in the Temple, Secretary to the Stewards.